3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambarâ

The betrothal proceeds as follows. Having picked a suitable 584
mate for his son, the father discusses the matter with his clan. If the match is approved he collects whales' teeth, mats, bark-cloth, and other property from his relatives. Several men of the clan present a formal proposal, accompanied by the property, to the girl's relatives. The proposal is considered by the girl's clan, which sends a formal answer on the following day. Both the proposal and the answer are frequently in written form today, since many Lauans can read and write the [212]
Mbauan dialect. A piece of paper and pencil are used. If the proposal is refused the property is returned. If it is accepted the two children are called by a term which means spouse (*watchi*). Further gifts of property and food are made at intervals to the girl's father by the boy's father.

The natives say that most child betrothals are consummated in marriage. However, if the young people do not care to marry, either one may break the engagement. In such a case the original gift of whales' teeth and property presented by the boy's clan to the girl's clan, or its equivalent, is returned. However, the food and property, amounting to considerable value, which her relatives from time to time have received from him, are not returned with the original gift.

Frequently the boy would like to free himself of the obligation to marry his betrothed. Just as the tabu on a man's sisters and female parallel cousins stimulates his sexual interest in them, so the accessibility of his cross cousins, especially his betrothed, renders them less desirable. However, he is loath to break his engagement, for if he does so his father and his father's brothers will be very angry because they will lose so much property.

On account of the surplus of women in southern Lau a 581 ●
man can easily secure a wife. If he does not marry his cross 883
cousin he chooses a mate from the many eligible girls on his island or on another. However, a young man is usually reluctant to marry and settle down. After his initiation, life

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883 becomes rather pleasant. He is accepted as a man in the
581 community, but he avoids the full responsibility of an adult. Although he sleeps in a men's house he is still a member of his father's household, cultivates his father's lands, and contributes to the daily supply and preparation of food for his father's earth oven. He participates in the ceremonies and games of his age group, spears fish, and sails on trading expeditions. He is sought after by the young women of the community among whom, with the exception of the group tabu to him, he is free to make conquests. The more numerous his affairs the greater he is desired by women. If he should have a
[848] bastard or two, the girl's father will care for the child. When he marries, however, he must accept the responsibilities of an adult; found his own household, work his own garden, and support his family.

A girl, on the other hand, is eager to marry. She is interested in securing a good husband—one who is a dependable provider and a strong man, physically and mentally—for her well-being and her position in the community will depend on her husband. Moreover, she anticipates a more satisfactory sex life after marriage. Once betrothed, a girl rarely breaks an engagement, but waits until the young man is ready to marry.

584 By the time a young man is about 25 years old his father
583 and his clan, whose interests still lie in the preservation of the sacred clan "mana", exert pressure, forcing him to take decisive steps toward marriage. He either marries his childhood betrothed, who is between 18 and 25 years old, or he breaks with her and becomes engaged to another girl. After he has secured her consent he informs his father, and the matter is discussed by the elders of his clan. If they approve of the match a formal proposal is made. If the betrothal is sanctioned by the girl's clan an engagement feast is prepared and presented by the young man's clan to the girl's clan. On the other hand, if the match is not sanctioned, the couple